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Media Contact:

Josh Gross, joshua.gross@fgh.com

Somaliland Welcomes Strong Expressions of Support from U.S. Administration and Congress

"Somaliland Partnership Act," introduced in the U.S. Senate, raises prospect of closer relations and security ties

WASHINGTON, DC., MARCH 18, 2022 – The President of the Republic of Somaliland, H.E. Muse Bihi Abdi, and a high-level government delegation met this week with senior officials in the Biden Administration and Congress during the first visit to the United States by a Somaliland Head of State since 2013.

In an unprecedented series of consultations, U.S. and Somaliland officials agreed to deepen cooperation and partnership on key shared objectives, including maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, environmental protection and business promotion.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, President Bihi's efforts to strengthen ties were met with mutual interest, as reflected in a [March 14 letter](#) sent by House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Michael McCaul (R-Texas), Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights Subcommittee Ranking Member Chris Smith (R-New Jersey), and a bipartisan group of eight other lawmakers to Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Their letter calls for increased U.S. engagement with Somaliland, noting that: "Somaliland's geo-strategic location on the Gulf of Aden, consistent support for democracy, cooperation on countering terrorism, piracy, and other security threats in the region, relations with Taiwan, and growing economic potential warrants that the United States explore additional opportunities to partner with Somaliland."

President Bihi welcomed the introduction of the bipartisan "[Somaliland Partnership Act](#)" introduced by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Jim Risch (R-Idaho), along with Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland) and Mike Rounds (R-South Dakota), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy. Led by a policy statement that "a strong relationship between the United States and Somaliland would provide numerous, mutually-beneficial, strategic opportunities," the Somaliland Partnership Act would require the Secretary of State to evaluate on an annual basis:

- U.S. assistance provided to Somaliland,
- consular services provided to Somaliland residents, and
- security assessments related to the Travel Advisory for U.S. citizens seeking to visit and do business in Somaliland.

The legislation also requires the Departments of State and Defense to study the feasibility of establishing a security partnership between the U.S. and Somaliland, including:

- opportunities for U.S. training of Somaliland's security sector, and

- the establishment of an “American Institute of Somaliland” in Hargeisa that would enable direct engagement between Somaliland the U.S. government, a similar diplomatic arrangement to that between the U.S. and Taiwan.

President Bihi’s talks with senior Biden Administration officials complemented the interest demonstrated in Congress, with both sides agreeing on the merits of working groups to advance mutual coordination and cooperation. Participants in these discussions included Dana Banks, Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Africa; Molly Phee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; Ilan Goldenberg, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs; Ambassador Andrew Young, Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Engagement, U.S. Africa Command; and Maura Barry, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

On Capitol Hill, the Somaliland delegation met with Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland) and Mike Rounds (R-South Dakota), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy; Reps. Gregory Meeks (D-New York) and Michael McCaul (R-Texas), Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-Washington); Reps. Karen Bass (D-California) and Chris Smith (R-New Jersey), Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights; and Reps. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), Young Kim (R-California), Tim Burchett (R-Tennessee), Brian Mast (R-Florida), Ilhan Omar (D-Minnesota) and Scott Perry (R-Pennsylvania).

“Through my consultations with the Biden Administration, Members of Congress and American business and civil society leaders this week, I am more confident than ever in the future of the U.S.-Somaliland partnership. I repeatedly heard a growing recognition and commendation of Somaliland’s extraordinary achievements in building a democratic, stable and self-sufficient state. Both Democrats and Republicans welcome accelerated efforts to deepen engagement on a range of security, economic and governance initiatives,” said President Bihi.

“After years of tireless effort, I am encouraged to see so many friends of Somaliland in the United States, particularly in the U.S. Congress. The path ahead is promising, and I look forward to future partnerships to fight terrorism, advance democracy, and create new opportunities for trade and investment in the Horn of Africa.”

President Bihi outlined a framework for U.S.-Somaliland cooperation in a [keynote address](#) at The Heritage Foundation on March 14. Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts endorsed U.S. recognition of Somaliland in his opening remarks, stating “America should proudly be the first state to recognize Somaliland as an independent state.”

The delegation, which includes cabinet ministers and prominent business leaders, also held consultations with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, as well as with the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

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